

# Apartment Fire Safety

*A guide for fire safety in apartments and other residential buildings.*

Nationally, smoking and heating equipment cause the most fires and fire deaths in apartments, condominiums, and other residential buildings.

## 1 Prevention – Remember prevention is your best defense against fire.

- ☐ **Be careful with smoking materials!** – Provide smokers with large, deep ashtrays. Wet cigarette butts and ashes before emptying ash trays into a wastebasket. Never smoke when you are lying down, drowsy, or in bed.
- ☐ **Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children!** - Store matches and lighters out of the sight and reach of children.
- ☐ **Home Heating** - Give space heaters space. Keep them at least three feet away from anything that can burn. Unplug heaters when you shut them off, leave your home or go to bed.
- ☐ **Electrical** – Unplug small appliances when not in use. Remember, extension cords should not be used in place of permanent wiring. Tripped circuit breakers should not be overlooked, they can be a sign of serious electrical problems.
- ☐ **Cooking** – Never leave cooking unattended. If a pan of food catches fire, slide a lid over it and turn off the burner.

## 2 Prepare- before fire strikes.

- ☐ **Insurance** – Consider obtaining renter's insurance. Take photographs and inventory of valuable items.
- ☐ **Know your building's fire protection system.** - Be familiar with the type of fire protection system in your building. Know the location of smoke alarms and whether your building is protected by fire sprinklers.
- ☐ **Smoke Alarms** – You are responsible for maintenance and testing of your smoke alarms and replacing batteries. Check them monthly by pushing the test button and listening for the alarm.
- ☐ **Develop and practice a home escape plan** - Know two ways out of every room and your escape route out of the building. Practice your escape plan with your neighbors.

## 3 In Case of Fire – Know what to do.

- ☐ **Don't rush out** – into the hallway. Feel the door. If it is hot, use another way out. If the door is cool, leave by the nearest exit.
- ☐ **If your building has a public announcement system**, listen carefully and follow directions.
- ☐ **Never use elevators in a fire.** Use the stairs. Close all doors behind you to slow fire spread.
- ☐ **Get out and stay out.** Go directly to your planned meeting place and stay there. If you think someone is trapped inside, notify the fire department.
- ☐ **If you can't escape from your apartment**, stuff wet towels, sheets or clothes around the doors and vents to keep smoke out. Call the fire department and tell them where you are. If no smoke is coming into the room you're in, open a window slightly both at the top and at the bottom. Stay low and wave a bright cloth, towel or sheet out the window to signal your location.

**Reference:** *Escape Planning for Apartment Dwellers*, [www.NFPA.org](http://www.NFPA.org); *Your Home Fire Safety Checklist*, [www.CPSC.gov](http://www.CPSC.gov)